



Highfield Residents' Association

AGM Minutes 8 November 2022

Highfield Church Hall 07.45pm

1. Introduction and welcome

Professor Roger Brown welcomed members and guest to the 46th HRA AGM. He thanked those who had attended the Open Meeting to discuss the Council proposals for Portswood Broadway which had immediately preceded the AGM.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies had been received from Councillor Kaur, Jon Walsh and Kate Fay (Southampton University), Sue Ingham and Ineke Ely.

3. Minutes

Minutes of the previous AGM held on 16 November 2021 had been circulated after that meeting, and now available on the HRA Website were taken as read.

4. HRA Chair's Report 2022, Professor Roger Brown

The Chair extended a welcome especially to the guests.

Professor Brown reminded those present that the main issues dealt with by HRA since the last AGM in November 2021, along with minutes of meetings had been posted on the website. HRA's role as a key community organisation and its ability to provide a 'glue' at a time when many other local community groups were struggling was highlighted. HRA provided members with information about issues that affected the community locally, in both Highfield and Portswood. HRA was also a channel for local views and opinion. Prof Brown stated that the meeting preceding the AGM regarding the Council's plans for Portswood had been a good example of this.

It was emphasised that HRA does not do this alone. In particular, close liaison with the City Council and with the University of Southampton had continued.

Ward Councillors had attended HRA committee meetings on a regular basis and their interest and support was greatly valued. A particular highlight this year had been a committee meeting with the new Council Leader, Councillor Satvir Kaur, who had given a good introduction to the new Council's agenda as well as expressing appreciation for the work of HRA.

University representatives had been regular attendees and had provided briefings on issues relevant to Highfield, for which we were very grateful. We had liaised closely with the University on a number of matters this year, including the end of academic year clear out by students. The Civic Agreement and the University Estates Master Plan will be the next significant issues. There had also been close work with sister residents associations, both directly and through the North Southampton Community Forum, which HRA had been, and continued to be, pleased to support.

Professor Brown went on to thank the Committee for its hard work and especially the officers: Nadine Johnson, HRA Digital Comms; Nicolla Martin Membership Secretary; Martin Benning, Treasurer; and Barbara Claridge, Secretary.

Planning remained one of the core activities. Individual planning applications had continued to be assessed and, where appropriate, HRA had submitted comments. HRA had given advice to applicants and potential applicants and have become involved in wider planning issues such as the new Southampton Local Plan. HRA also commented on national planning policies in the last year. In this context HRA would be very concerned at any further loosening of the national planning framework, for instance by extending Permitted Development Rights to take them further outside proper planning controls.

As regards local planning applications, work continued within the HRA planning guidelines that are on the website. Development had not automatically been opposed. But overdevelopment had generally been opposed, such as adding a storey to an already large house or filling in a garden with a new building. The trend towards the change in dwellings becoming multiple occupancy, where this results in a loss of housing diversity, had been opposed generally. This was one of the aspects of the new Local Plan that would be scrutinised most closely under the City-wide consultation that had just commenced.

Professor Brown highlighted specific cases of HRA success in resisting inappropriate developments in our area. Examples this year, at Planning Inspectorate level, had included: 1 Blenheim Gardens and 61 Highfield Crescent (both appeals were dismissed in August 2022) and the 5G monopole Application on the Avenue, which was still awaiting a decision.

Professor Brown particularly singled out the work of the Secretary, Barbara Claridge, who had successfully monitored and coordinated responses to applications including giving advice to applicants in line with our Guidelines.

Crime was highlighted as another continuing local issue. The Highfield Crime Information Sharing WhatsApp Group – sponsored by HRA and managed by Nadine Johnson – had played an important part in sharing information about local crimes and improving the reporting of crimes to the local Police. Again

details of reported incidents were on the HRA website. Inspector Sharath Ranjan, who spoke at last year's AGM had moved on and his replacement, Inspector Brian Goodall, had recently been appointed as the senior police officer of our area working out of Portswood Police Station. Professor Brown hoped that Inspector Goddard would be able to meet the committee at some point.

The WhatsApp group was a good example of the effort that HRA had put into timely and effective communications. Throughout the year, HRA has communicated with members and others in a number of ways:

- Regular emails and letters
- The HRA website
- The HRA Facebook Page (currently 932 followers)
- E-news – direct mailing to members
- Our Newsletter – delivered throughout Highfield
- Dedicated HRA email address

All of this resulted in activities that have been entirely transparent. Nadine Johnson was particularly thanked for her tireless work in this role.

At last year's AGM Prof Brown had announced that HRA would be facilitating membership by enabling on-line membership/renewal. This was working well. To date 176 membership forms had been processed by Direct Banking. Even so, membership numbers had been affected – like much of the rest of the economy – by the Covid pandemic. One of our on-going tasks would be to rebuild these numbers so that we can continue to be effective. The Membership Secretary, Nicolla Martin and her Street Reps were thanked for their excellent work here.

Finally, Professor Brown thanked Pearsons for their continued sponsorship of our well-regarded Newsletter and also the various local businesses that have given membership discounts which much exceed the still-modest level of an HRA annual subscription, the most recent being NEST Coffee house in Portswood.

Professor Brown concluded by saying that HRA was an active and effective local community organisation. But it depended heavily on those who have worked hard on members' behalf. Continued support through membership and attendance at meetings like this therefore remains vital.

5. Financial Report

a. Presentation of the Accounts 2021

The Examined Accounts for 2021 had been circulated to members in advance of the meeting.

Treasurer, Martin Benning added the following comments:

HRA income, compared to the previous year (2020), was about £1000 less – this was almost entirely due to lower advertising income. We were now back on track with advertising revenue. He thanked sponsors for their continual support.

Expenditure in 2021 compared to the previous year was almost the same.

Net income for the year was £1601 – the previous year ((2020) it was £2809.

At the end of this year (2022), £5000 would be transferred from the Current Account to the Savings Account. This will mean that our designated funds will be £15000. Our aim was to restore this to £20000 to future proof HRA against any large expenditure, particularly legal advice.

b. Approval of Accounts for 2021

Professor Brown sought approval of the 2021 Accounts . This was agreed by the meeting.

c. Committee recommendation regarding Membership Fees

The Treasurer proposed that the HRA household membership fee would remain at £10 for the following year from January 2023. This was approved.

d. Ratification of the Accounts Examiner

The Chair proposed that Malcolm White be ratified as the Examiner of Accounts for the following year. This was approved.

6. Ratification and election of committee members

Ratification of standing committee members at three-year break point wishing to stand again.

Martin Benning, Ken Burtenshaw, David White and Barbara Claridge were ratified as committee members for a further period.

Election of new committee members. Karen Edwards, proposed by Nicolla Martin and seconded by Nadine Johnson and Jayne Tamlyn, proposed by Jerry Gillen and seconded by Barbara Claridge were both elected to the committee.

7. Close of the Annual General Meeting

The AGM closed at 8.05pm

Following the meeting a Members' Reception was held between 8.15pm – 9.00pm